

Assembly Bill No. 717

CHAPTER 158

An act to add Section 37222.5 to the Education Code, and to add Section 6715 to the Government Code, relating to state observances.

[Approved by Governor September 25, 2009. Filed with
Secretary of State September 25, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 717, Cook. Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.

Existing law requires the Governor to proclaim various days as holidays and days of remembrance. Existing law also designates certain days in each year as having special significance for purposes of encouraging schools to observe those days and conduct suitable commemorative exercises.

This bill would require the Governor to annually proclaim March 30 of each year as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day." The bill would additionally encourage schools to conduct exercises on March 30 of each year to recognize the contributions of those involved in the Vietnam conflict.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:

(a) In 2007, the United States Congress, by separate Senate and House Resolutions, declared that a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day should be established.

(b) The Vietnam War was fought in Vietnam from 1961 to 1975, and involved North Vietnam and Viet Cong in conflict with the United States and South Vietnam.

(c) The United States became involved in Vietnam because policymakers in the United States believed that if South Vietnam fell to a communist government, communism would spread throughout the rest of southeast Asia.

(d) Members of the United States Armed Forces began serving in an advisory role to the South Vietnamese in 1961.

(e) As a result of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents on August 2 and August 4, 1964, the United States overwhelmingly passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (Public Law 99-408), on August 7, 1964, which effectively handed over the war-making powers to President Johnson until such time as "peace and security" had returned to Vietnam.

(f) In 1965, there were 80,000 United States troops in Vietnam, and by 1969 a peak of approximately 543,000 troops was reached.

(g) On January 27, 1973, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which required the release of all United States prisoners of war held in North Vietnam and the withdrawal of all United States Armed Forces from South Vietnam.

(h) On March 30, 1973, the United States Armed Forces completed the withdrawal of combat troops from Vietnam.

(i) More than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives in Vietnam and more than 300,000 were wounded.

(j) In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in the District of Columbia to commemorate those members of the United States Armed Forces who died or were declared missing in action in Vietnam.

(k) The Vietnam War was an extremely divisive issue among the people of the United States.

(l) Upon their return home, members of the United States Armed Forces who served bravely and faithfully for the United States during the Vietnam War were caught in the crossfire of public debate about the involvement of the United States in the war.

(m) The establishment of a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day would be an appropriate way to honor those members of the United States Armed Forces who served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

SEC. 2. Section 37222.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

37222.5. (a) In addition to the days specified in Section 37222, the day of March 30 in each year shall be designated and set apart as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.

(b) On the day designated in subdivision (a), all public schools and educational institutions are encouraged to observe that day and to conduct exercises recognizing the contributions of all those involved in the Vietnam War and remembering the sacrifices they made for their country.

(c) It is the intent of the Legislature that the exercises encouraged in this section be integrated into the regular school program, and be conducted by the school or institution within the amount otherwise budgeted for educational programs.

SEC. 3. Section 6715 is added to the Government Code, to read:

6715. The Governor shall annually proclaim March 30 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day.